



Author Spotlight Ivan Doig

Grounded in the specific land and language of the American West, Ivan Doig eloquently captures many of life's most universal themes in his fiction and nonfiction: the relationship between past and present, environmental protection versus exploitation, and the contributions of individuals within a larger, historical context.

Born in White Sulphur Springs, Montana, in 1939, Doig grew up in the Rocky Mountain frontier that would provide the inspiration for much of his writing. Though his parents and grandparents were ranch hands, sheepherders, and homesteaders, Doig decided early on that he wanted a different life for himself, and attended Northwestern University where he received both his bachelor's and master's degrees in journalism. Eventually, he would earn a Ph.D. in history from the University of Washington. Like Mark Twain and Ernest Hemingway before him, Doig's career as a newspaperman would hone his skills as a writer, helping him develop a critical eye for detail and a nuanced ear for dialogue. As a student of history, Doig acquired the research skills to uncover extensive background that lend his works an unmistakable air of authenticity. Hailed as Wallace Stegner's successor as "dean of Western American letters," Doig focuses on the average people, Westerners who carved out an existence through sheer dint of their labors: ranchers and rangers, cowboys and cooks, sheepherders and truck drivers. These were people he knew firsthand. In 1984 Doig began writing what would be known as his "McCaskill Family" trilogy. Beginning with *English Creek*, Doig recreated life in a small Montana town in the fictional Two Medicine County during those interim years between the end of the Great Depression and the beginning of World War II. The second volume, *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, harkened back to 1889 and Montana's entry into statehood, while the final volume, *Ride with Me, Mariah Montana*, takes place during Montana's centennial year and shows how the state's past shaped its future. "My books," says Doig, "are the result of those popular pulls of the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific. Whichever the setting, in both my fiction and nonfiction, I try to work two stubborn substances, research and craft, into becoming the hardest alloy of all — a good story."

Visit Ivan Doig's website at www.ivandoig.com He includes commentary on how or why he wrote each book, and lists of discussion questions for book groups.



Books by Ivan Doig available at the Lynchburg Public Library

English Creek (1984)
Dancing at the Rascal Fair (1987)
Ride with Me, Mariah Montana (1990)
Heart Earth (1993)
Bucking the Sun (1996)
Mountain Time (1999)
Prairie Nocturne (2003)
The Whistling Season (2006)

If you like Ivan Doig's books, try some of these:

Specific books:

Judy Blunt (nonfiction - *Breaking Clean*)
Annie Dillard – *The Living*
Carol Emshwiller – *Leaping Man Hill*
Kent Nelson – *Land That Moves, Land That Stands Still*

Authors

Walter Van Tilburg Clark
Allan W. Eckert
Loren Estleman
Ed Gorman
A. B. Guthrie, Jr.
Kent Haruf
Elmer Kelton
Craig Lesley
Cormac McCarthy
Larry McMurtry
Annie Proulx
James Reasoner
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